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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

#### OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Immediate Release TO AMs THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1944

The season's landings of Pacific sardines at northern California ports totaled 82,715 tons by September 16, or about 22 percent below landings for the same period last year, the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries reported today.

The landings reported were made during a period of approximately six weeks since the season opened in northern California August 1. The sardine fishing season from the southern ports of San Pedro and San Diego legally opened October 1.

Some decline in the catch this year had been expected, officials of the Coordinator's Office said, on the basis of predictions by federal biologists that the fish would be relatively scarce. The sardine population has recently experienced a series of poor spawning seasons, with no important numbers of young fish added to the stock since 1939.

Sardines spawn during the late winter and spring over a wide coastal area extending from near shore out to 200 miles or more offshore. As the young fish grow, they must compete with each other for food. Since the available supply of marine food organisms varies greatly from year to year, the death rate of young sardines also shows tremendous variations.

The fact that the past summer was an unusually cold one on the California coast also has a bearing on the poor catches made by sardine fishermen, according to the Coordinator's Office. For some reason not entirely understood, the fish are harder to find when the water is cold.

The Pacific sardine, also called the pilchard, is the nation's most important fish in terms of the tonnage landed, normally making up about one-fourth of the total U. S. catch of fish and shellfish.

Because of the great importance of the sardine catch as a source of canned fish, meal and oil for animal feeding, and oil for industrial purposes, this fishery is operating under a coordinated production plan administered by the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries for the second consecutive year. The purpose of the plan is to obtain the maximum production possible under current conditions, to insure a smooth flow of fish into the various canning and processing plants, and to obtain a proper division between canned fish, meal, and oil.

As of September 16 this year, 430,187 cases of canned sardines had been packed, compared with 561,819 cases packed from the larger catch by the same date last year.